

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. **(Currently Amended)** A sliding element for seals comprising:

a fired preformed material including,

a binder having 25 to 75 weight % carbonaceous impalpable powdery aggregate of non-graphitizing carbon and/or graphitizing carbon and 20 to 50 weight % synthetic resin ~~as a binder~~,

wherein the binder is blended with a carbon matrix having carbonaceous carbon fibers free of surface treatment ~~are blended within the~~ in a range of 5 to 25 weight % ~~and inside a carbon matrix~~,

wherein said carbonaceous carbon fibers are randomly scattered in the carbon matrix, and

wherein said carbonaceous carbon fibers are 5 to 30 μm in diameter, ~~and~~ 50 to 300 μm in length, and have a Vickers hardness of at least 200.
2. **(Canceled)**
3. **(Previously Presented)** The sliding element for seals according to claim 1, wherein a Vickers hardness of said carbonaceous impalpable powdery aggregate of non-graphitizing carbon and/or graphitizing carbon is 80 or more.
4. **(Currently Amended)** The sliding element for seals according to claim 1, wherein said synthetic resin ~~as said binder~~ includes at least one of phenolic resin, epoxy resin, furan resin, polyester resin, and naphthalene resin.
5. **(Canceled)**

6. **(Currently Amended)** The sliding element for seals according to claim 3, wherein said synthetic resin ~~as said binder~~ includes at least one of phenolic resin, epoxy resin, furan resin, polyester resin, and naphthalene resin.

7. **(Previously Presented)** The sliding element for seals according to claim 1, wherein the sliding element for seals is used as one of a mechanical seal for a water pump, a mechanical seal for a compressor of a car air conditioner, a mechanical seal for a pump of industrial use and a mechanical seal for a pump of all purposes.

8. **(Previously Presented)** The sliding element for seals according to claim 3, wherein the sliding element for seals is used as one of a mechanical seal for a water pump, a mechanical seal for a compressor of a car air conditioner, a mechanical seal for a pump of industrial use and a mechanical seal for a pump of all purposes.

9. **(Previously Presented)** The sliding element for seals according to claim 4, wherein the sliding element for seals is used as one of a mechanical seal for a water pump, a mechanical seal for a compressor of a car air conditioner, a mechanical seal for a pump of industrial use and a mechanical seal for a pump of all purposes.

10. **(Previously Presented)** A seal assembly comprising a sliding element according to claim 1 and a mating sliding element comprised of a material having a Vickers hardness greater than that of the sliding element of claim 1.

11. **(Previously Presented)** The seal assembly according to claim 10, wherein the mating sliding element is comprised of silicon carbide.

12. **(Currently Amended)** A process of manufacturing a sliding element for seals, comprising the steps of:

blending a source material binder comprising 25 to 75 weight % carbonaceous impalpable powdery aggregate of non-graphitizing carbon and/or graphitizing carbon and 20 to 50 weight % synthetic resin ~~as a binder~~ with 5 to 25 weight % carbonaceous carbon fibers that are free of surface treatment;

mixing, kneading and molding the blended material to a preform; and

firing the preform at a predetermined temperature,

wherein said carbonaceous carbon fibers are 5 to 30 μm in diameter, ~~and~~ 50 to 300 μm in length, and have a Vickers hardness of at least 200.

13. **(Canceled)**

14. **(Currently Amended)** The process of manufacturing a sliding element for seals according to claim 12, wherein said synthetic resin ~~as said binder~~ includes at least one of phenolic resin, epoxy resin, furan resin, polyester resin, and naphthalene resin, and wherein a firing temperature for said firing is 800 to 1500°C.

15. **(Canceled)**

16. **(Currently Amended)** The sliding element for seals according to claim 1, wherein said carbonaceous carbon fibers are manufactured from one of polyacrylonitrile series carbon fibers and pitch series carbon fibers.

17. **(Currently Amended)** The sliding element for seals according to claim 1, wherein said carbonaceous carbon fibers withstand a maximum heat treatment temperature of 1500°C.

18. **(Canceled).**

19. **(Currently Amended)** The process of manufacturing a sliding element for seals according to claim 12, wherein said carbonaceous carbon fibers are manufactured from one of polyacrylonitrile series carbon fibers and pitch series carbon fibers.

20. **(Currently Amended)** The process of manufacturing a sliding element for seals according to claim 12, wherein said carbonaceous carbon fibers withstand a maximum heat treatment temperature of 1500°C.

21. **(Canceled).**